



[Home](#) › [Articles](#) › Insights into hours worked, October 2021

Insights into hours worked, October 2021

Released 11/11/2021

Source: [Labour Force, Australia, October 2021](#)

On this page

[Hours worked and employment](#)

[States and territories](#)

[People working fewer hours](#)

[People working zero hours](#)

The ABS previously indicated its intention to cease publishing this article every month after the May 2021 issue (on 17 June 2021), and to only publish future updates as needed. Given the Delta lockdowns and other restrictions, the ABS has continued to publish further articles each month and will continue to until changes in hours worked series return to pre-COVID conditions.

The October survey reference period was from 26 September to 9 October 2021. New South Wales, Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory were in lockdown during this period, with most changes to lockdowns occurring after the end of the reference period

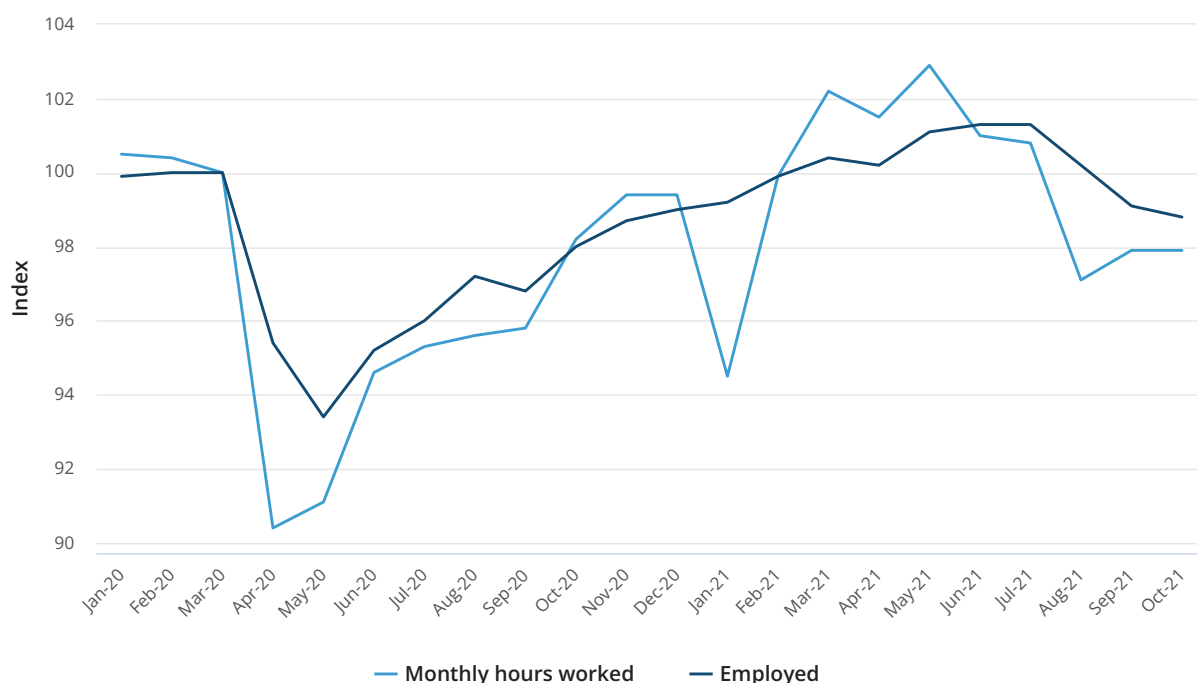
Hours worked and employment

Hours worked decreased by 0.1% (in seasonally adjusted terms) between September and

October 2021, while employment decreased by 0.4% or 46,300 people.

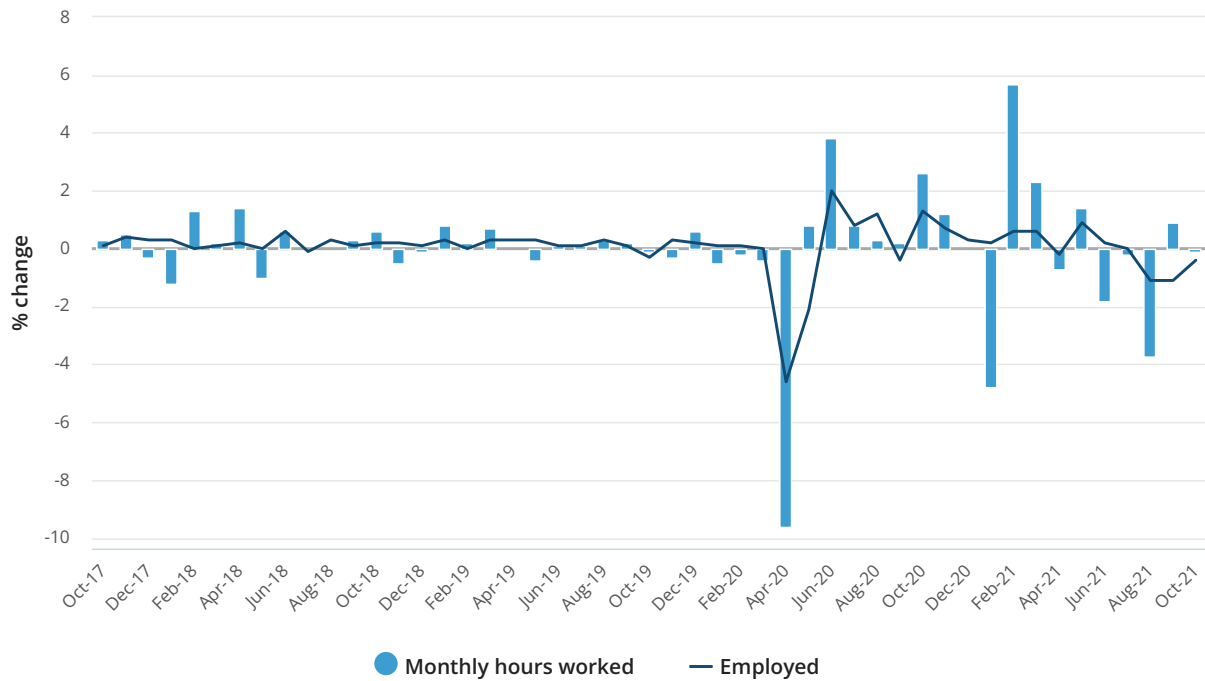
Chart 1 shows changes in hours worked and employment, indexed to March 2020, while Chart 2 shows monthly changes in hours worked and employment since October 2017. They highlight the extent to which hours worked provide a more comprehensive indication of the extent of labour market impacts over the pandemic than employment, given some employed people temporarily have reduced hours or no work, without necessarily losing their jobs.

Chart 1: Hours worked and employment index, Seasonally adjusted (March 2020 = 100.0)



Source: Labour Force, Australia Tables 1 and 19

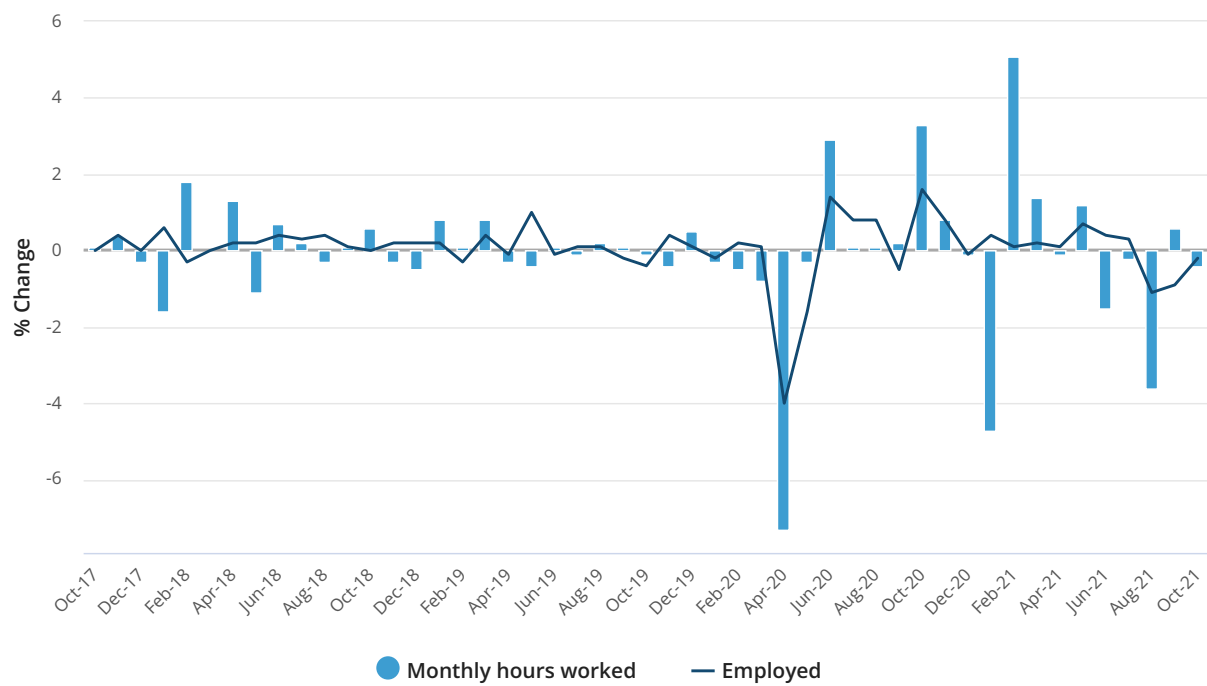
Chart 2: Monthly change in employment and hours worked, Seasonally adjusted



Source: Labour Force, Australia Tables 1 and 19

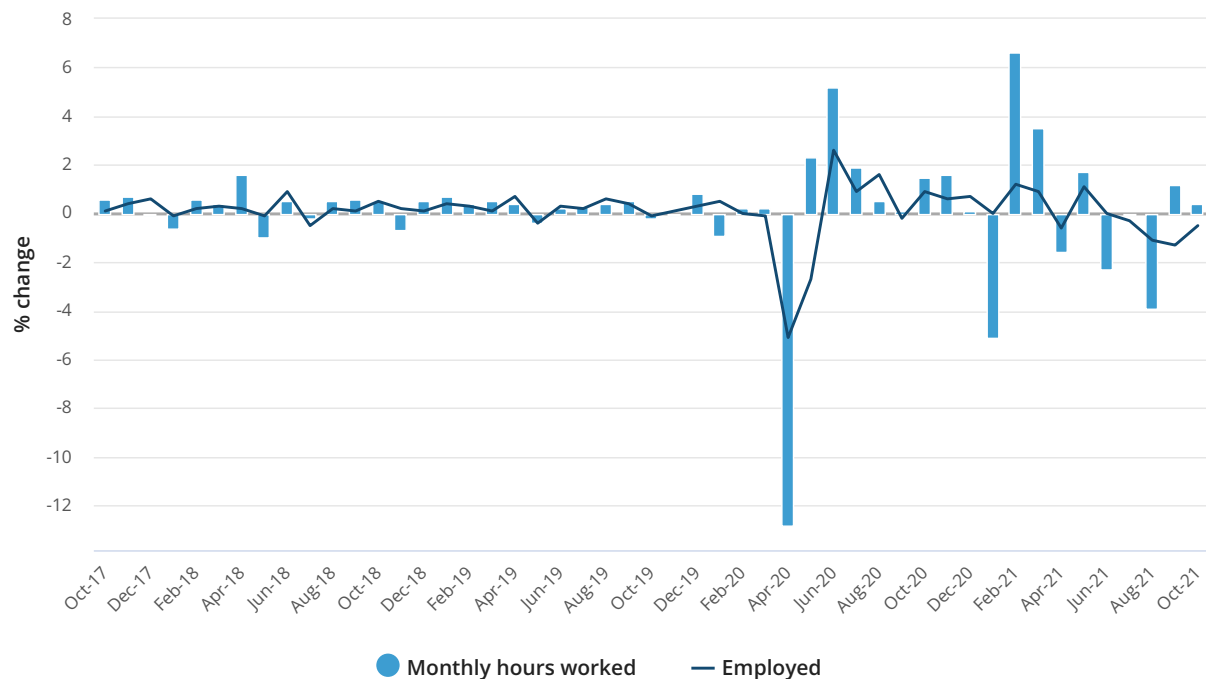
Changes in employment and hours worked for men and women

Table 2a: Monthly change in employment and hours worked, Males, Seasonally adjusted



Source: Labour Force, Australia Tables 1 and 19

Table 2b: Monthly change in employment and hours worked, Females, Seasonally adjusted



Source: Labour Force, Australia Tables 1 and 19

States and territories

Over the COVID period, hours worked have been impacted when jurisdictions move into and out of lockdowns and other restrictions. This was again evident in changes in hours worked across many of the states and territories in October.

Monthly hours worked in New South Wales rose by 20.0 million hours (3.9%) between September and October. The monthly increase may be attributed to economic activity gearing up in preparation for lockdowns lifting on 11 October, and less people than usual taking annual leave during the school holiday period. Despite this increase, hours worked were 5.8% lower than May 2021, before the Delta outbreak, and 5.2% lower than March 2020, before the start of the pandemic.

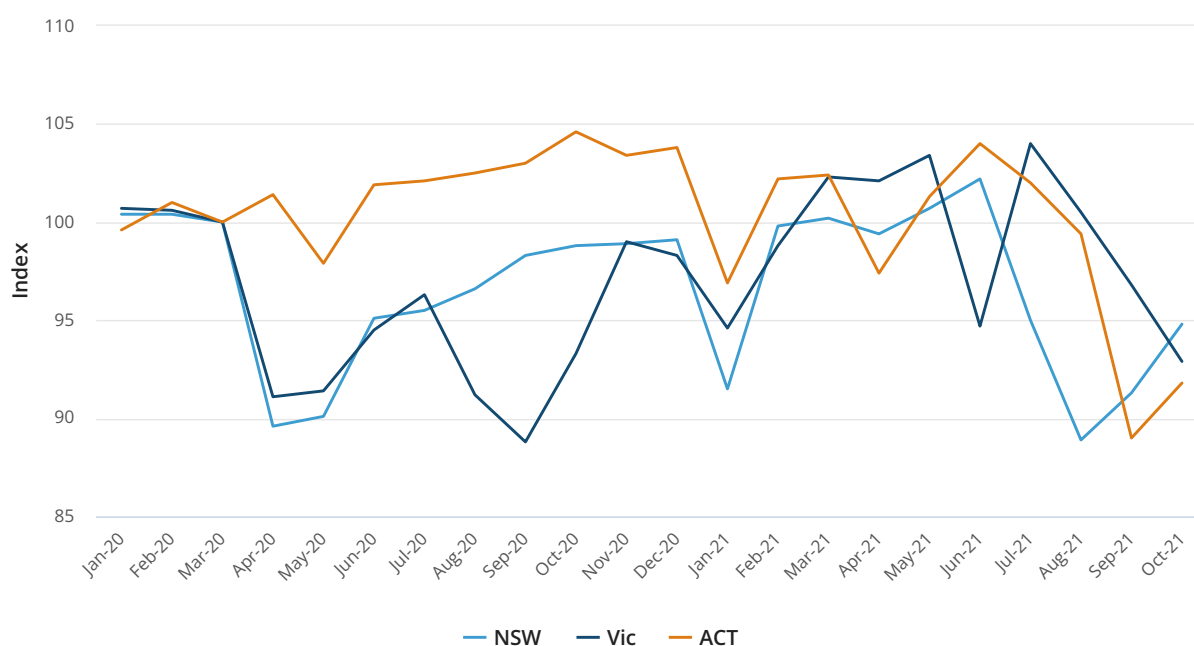
Monthly hours worked in Victoria fell by 18.0 million hours (4.0%) between September and

October, following the 3.7% fall between August and September 2021. In October they were 10.2% lower than May 2021 and 7.1% lower than March 2020.

Monthly hours worked in the Australian Capital Territory rose by 0.9 million hours (3.1%) between September and October, following the record 10.5% fall between August and September. In October they were 9.5% lower than May 2021 and 8.2% lower than March 2020. The increase in October may be attributed to less people taking annual leave during the school holiday period, and preparations for the end of lockdown on 15 October 2021.

Chart 3 shows the changes in monthly hours worked for New South Wales, Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory indexed to March 2020.

Chart 3: Monthly hours worked index, selected states and territories, seasonally adjusted (March 2020 = 100)



Source: Labour Force, Australia Tables 19 and 19a

People working fewer hours

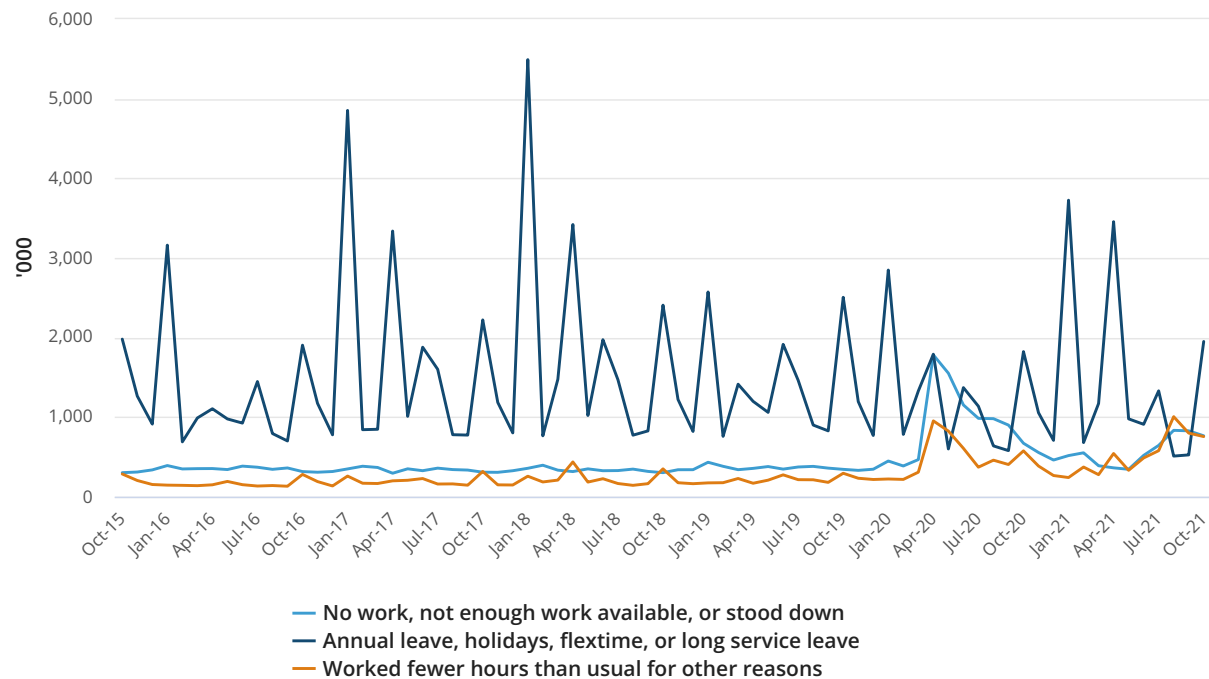
Chart 4 shows the number of people working fewer (or no) hours in October 2021:

- due to taking annual leave, holidays, flextime, or long service leave - which was 1,950,100 people
- due to economic reasons - which was 765,100 people. This was a decrease of 62,500 from September 2021
- due to other reasons - which was 755,400 people. This was a decrease of 43,700 from September 2021

When assessing the impacts of lockdowns, it is important to consider larger than seasonal changes in people reporting 'economic reasons' (that is, people reporting having no work, not enough work or being stood down) and 'other reasons'. People reporting other reasons has increased during periods of lockdowns, indicating that some respondents feel that the longstanding categories do not fully capture the complexity of the restrictions and/or that it is difficult for them to attribute the reasons to a single category.

In addition to economic reasons and other reasons, some people who are impacted by lockdowns may also report different reasons, such as taking annual leave or holidays or using flextime during the lockdown period. All reasons are available from data cubes EM2a and EM2b.

Chart 4: People working fewer than their usual hours, or no hours at all,
Original

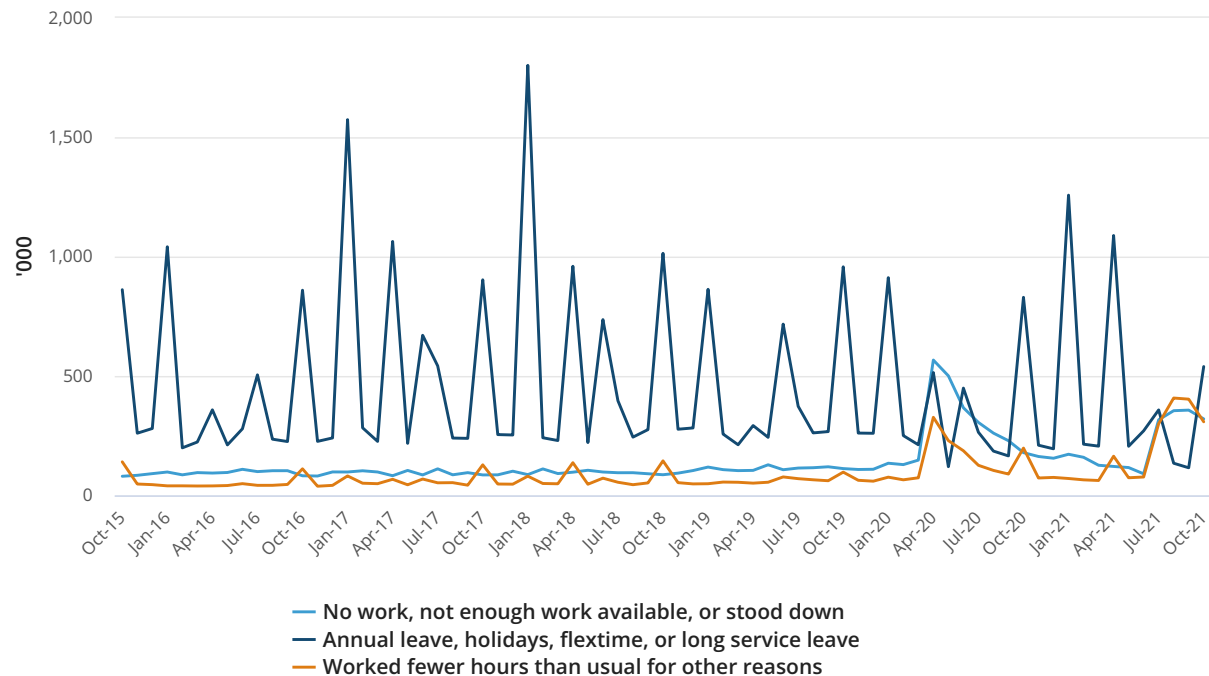


Source: Labour Force, Australia Data Cube EM2a

Chart 4a shows the number of people working fewer (or no) hours in October 2021 in New South Wales:

- due to taking annual leave, holidays, flexitime, or long service leave - which was 539,400 people
- due to economic reasons - which was 320,200 people. This was a decrease of 36,700 from September 2021
- due to other reasons - which was 308,100 people. This was a decrease of 94,800 from September 2021

Chart 4a: People working fewer than their usual hours in New South Wales, Original

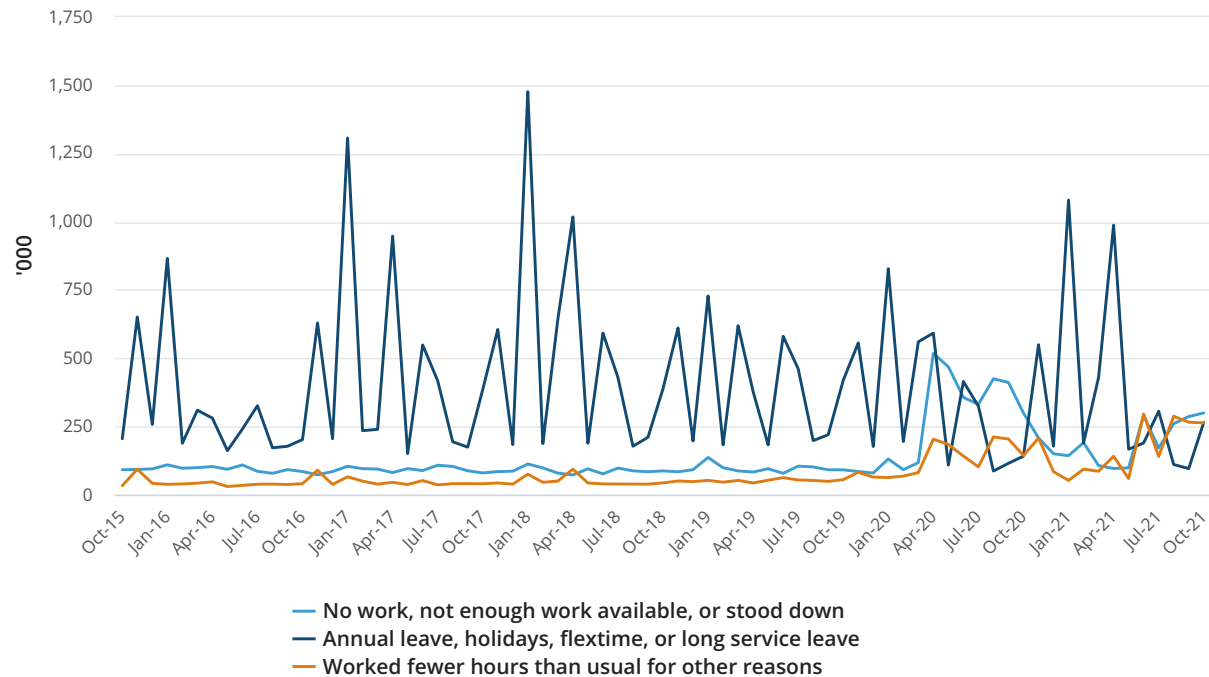


Source: Labour Force, Australia Data Cube EM2b

Chart 4b shows the number of people working fewer (or no) hours in October 2021 in Victoria:

- due to taking annual leave, holidays, flextime, or long service leave - which was 264,900 people
- due to economic reasons - which was 299,400 people. This was an increase of 13,000 from September 2021
- due to other reasons - which was 263,200 people. This was a decrease of 2,300 from September 2021

Chart 4b: People working fewer than their usual hours in Victoria, Original

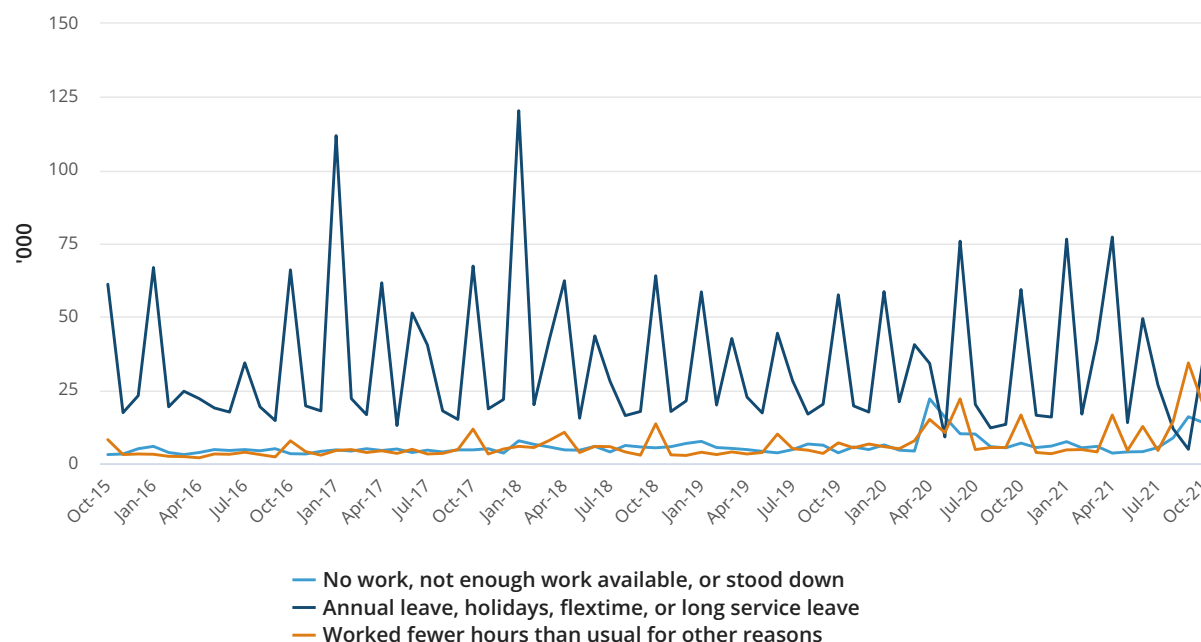


Source: Labour Force, Australia Data Cube EM2b

Chart 4c shows the number of people working fewer (or no) hours in October 2021 in the Australian Capital Territory:

- due to taking annual leave, holidays, flexitime, or long service leave - which was 36,200 people
- due to economic reasons - which was 13,900 people. This was a decrease of 2,000 from September 2021
- due to other reasons - which was 19,600 people. This was a decrease of 14,700 from September 2021

Chart 4c: People working fewer than their usual hours in the Australian Capital Territory, Original

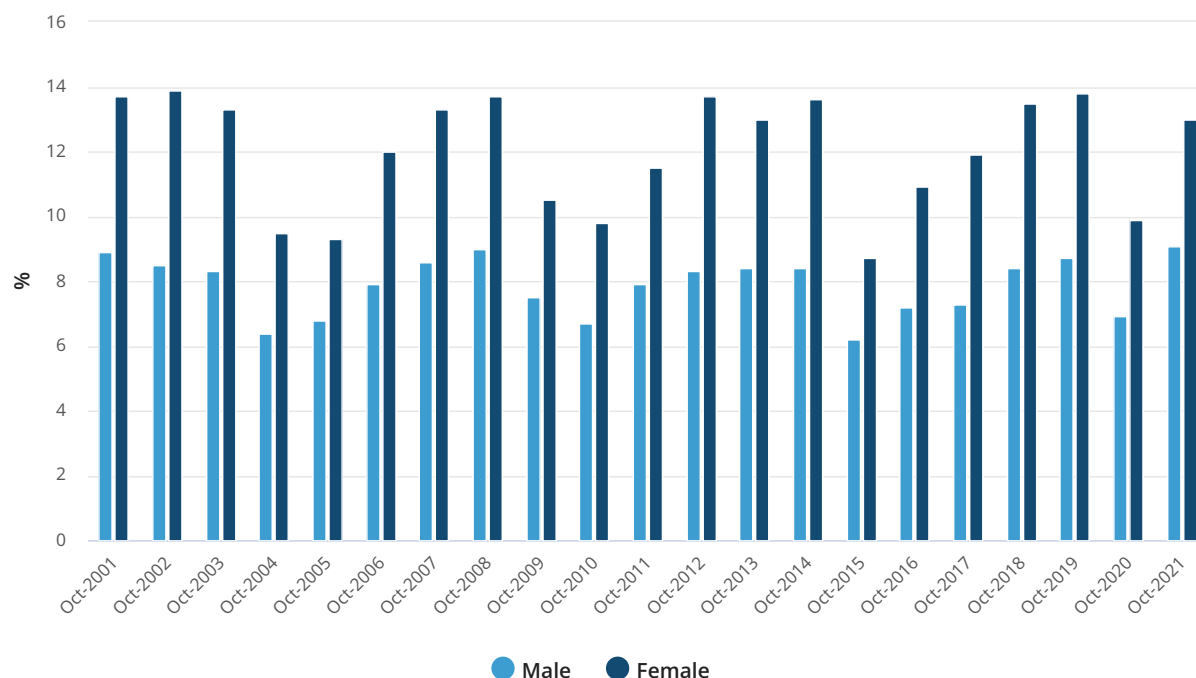


Source: Labour Force, Australia Data Cube EM2b

People working zero hours

Chart 5 shows the proportion of employed males and females who worked zero hours in October over the past 20 years. In October 2021, 10.9% of employed people in Australia worked zero hours (10.1% in New South Wales, 11.6% in Victoria, and 8.3% in the Australian Capital Territory).

Chart 5: Proportion of employed working zero hours, Original

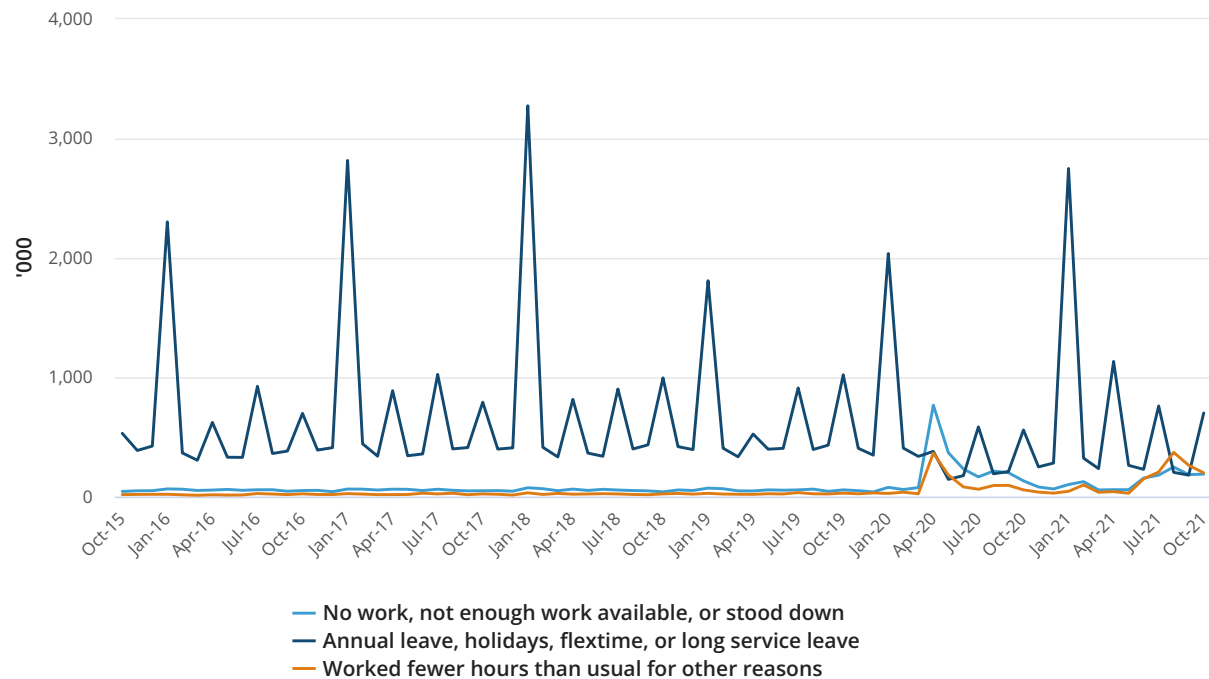


Source: Labour Force, Australia, Detailed Table 9

Chart 6 shows the number of people working zero hours for economic reasons, due to taking annual leave, holidays, flextime, or long service leave and due to other reasons. As with people working fewer hours, there is a distinct (although dampened over the COVID-19 period), seasonal pattern to people taking leave, with large increases each January and during school holiday periods. In October 2021:

- 701,300 employed people worked zero hours due to taking annual leave, holidays, flextime, or long service leave
- 189,200 employed people worked zero hours for economic reasons. This was an increase of 4,400 from September 2021
- 199,700 employed people worked zero hours for other reasons. This was a decrease of 63,600 from September 2021

Chart 6: Employed people working zero hours, Original

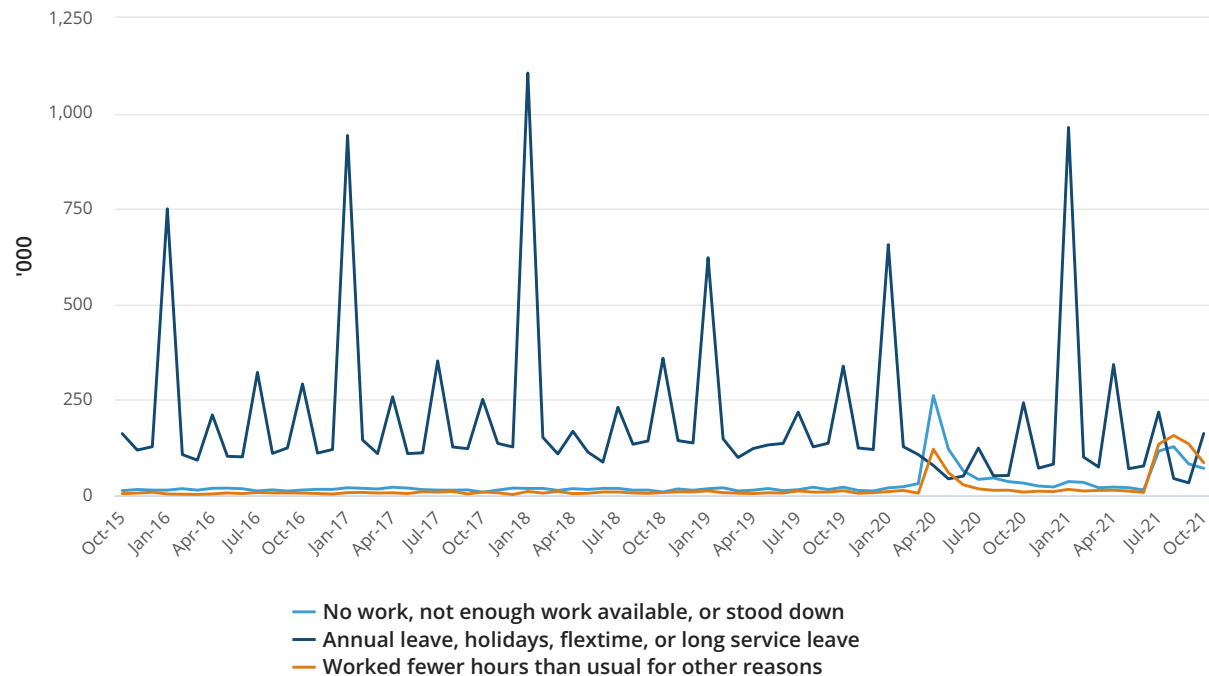


Source: Labour Force, Australia Data Cube EM2a

Chart 6a shows the number of employed people who worked zero hours in New South Wales in October 2021:

- due to taking annual leave, holidays, flextime, or long service leave - which was 161,900 people
- due to economic reasons - which was 70,800 people. This was a decrease of 11,500 from September 2021
- due to other reasons - which was 85,300 people. This was a decrease of 49,500 from September 2021

Chart 6a: Employed people working zero hours in New South Wales, Original

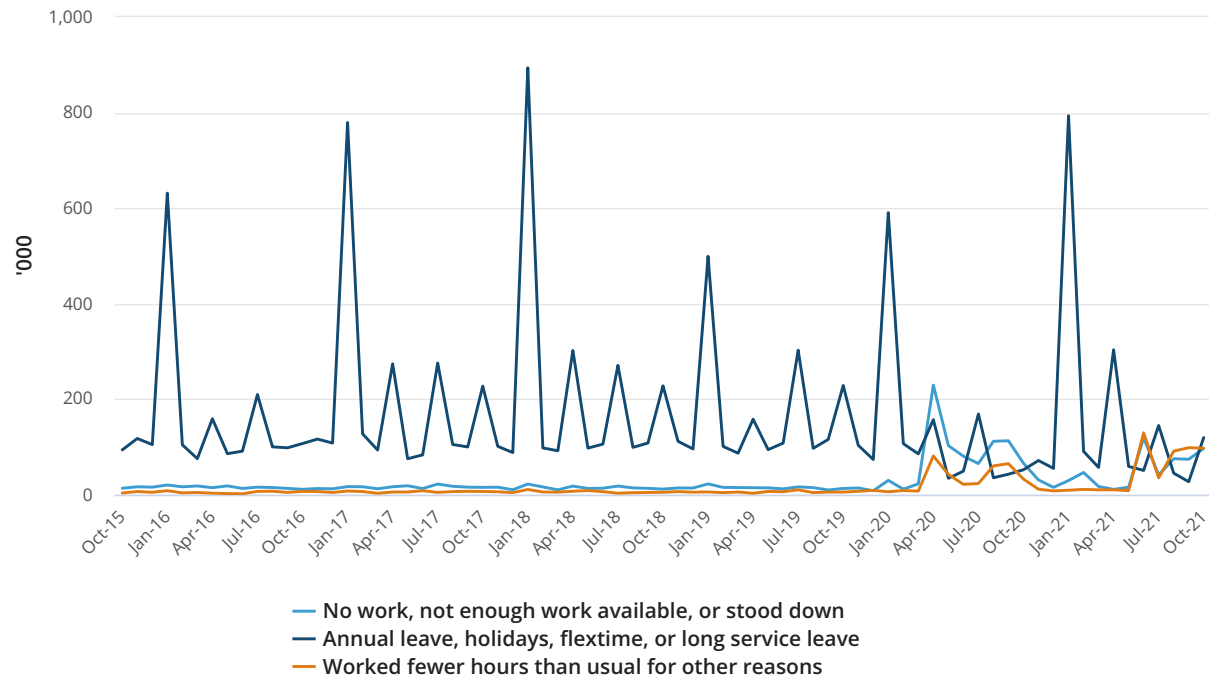


Source: Labour Force, Australia Data Cube EM2b

Chart 6b shows the number of employed people who worked zero hours in Victoria in October 2021:

- due to taking annual leave, holidays, flextime, or long service leave - which was 119,600 people
- due to economic reasons - which was 96,900 people. This was an increase of 22,600 from September 2021
- due to other reasons - which was 97,400 people. This was a decrease of 1,000 from September 2021

Chart 6b: Employed people working zero hours in Victoria, Original

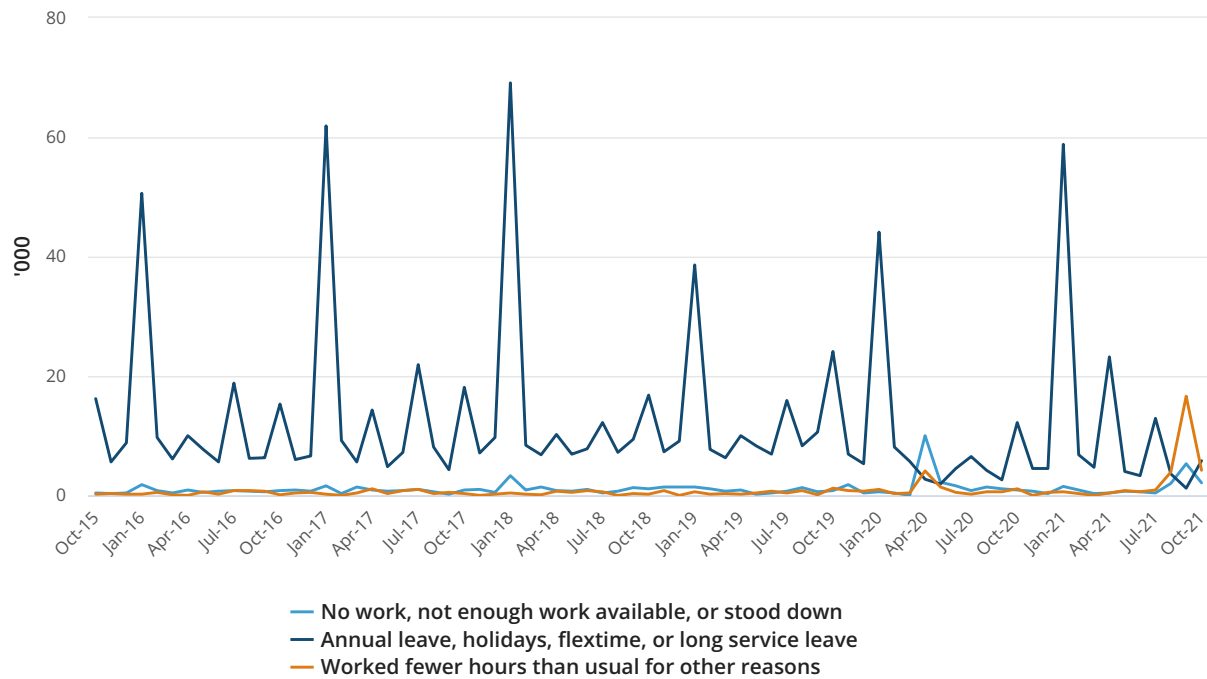


Source: Labour Force, Australia Data Cube EM2b

Chart 6c shows the number of employed people who worked zero hours in the Australian Capital Territory in October 2021:

- due to taking annual leave, holidays, flextime, or long service leave - which was 5,800 people
- due to economic reasons - which was 2,100 people. This was a decrease of 3,200 from September 2021
- due to other reasons - which was 4,200 people. This was a decrease of 12,400 from September 2021

Chart 6c: Employed people working zero hours in the Australian Capital Territory, Original



Source: Labour Force, Australia Data Cube EM2b

For further information, email labour.statistics@abs.gov.au (<mailto:labour.statistics@abs.gov.au>).